

*duh Jarvis*

## MASSACHUSETTS MEDICAL SOCIETY.

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At a meeting of the Counsellors of the Massachusetts Medical Society, held February 2, 1848 —

On motion of Dr. Peirson, of Salem, it was

*Resolved*, That a Committee be appointed from the Fellows of the Society, to examine the Charter and By-Laws of the Society, and report at the next meeting of the Counsellors, if any and what alterations are necessary therein.

The following gentlemen were appointed to this Committee :

DR. JOHN WARE, *of Boston.*

“ A. L. PEIRSON, *of Salem.*

“ WINSLOW LEWIS, *of Boston.*

“ JOHN JEFFRIES, “

“ J. V. C. SMITH, “

“ H. H. CHILDS, *of Pittsfield.*

“ JOHN C. DALTON, *of Lowell.*

## Report of the Committee.

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THE Committee appointed by the Counsellors to examine the Charter and By-laws of the Massachusetts Medical Society, and to consider whether any alterations are necessary therein, have the honor to offer the following

### R E P O R T .

In attending to this subject, the Committee have had especially in view the opinion held, and often expressed by many Members of the Society, that, as at present constituted, it does not accomplish all the purposes of which it is capable ; and, particularly, that in many of the remote parts of the State, it fails to secure the favor of the profession, and consequently that only a limited proportion of regularly educated physicians find it for their interest to become its members.

The Committee, in thus taking into consideration the operation of the Society, are satisfied that its greatest influence has been exerted, and its best effects produced in and around the place which is the centre of its organization. Those who are able to attend its meetings, and take part in the manage-

ment of its affairs, are of course most interested in its prosperity, and conform most readily to its requirements. Those, on the contrary, who reside at such a distance as makes their attendance difficult and infrequent—or impossible—feel naturally a less lively concern in it—they hardly perceive their actual connection with it;—they consider themselves called upon to obey laws which they have no voice in making, and to contribute to the expenses of an organization in which they find it difficult to take part. As a consequence of this, regularly educated persons who enter the profession under these circumstances have not sufficient inducements offered to them to become members. They perceive that the Society is little known to those among whom they are thrown, and has but little influence over them; that it is not necessary to their reputable standing among physicians, nor to their success with the community, that they should be connected with it.

This inequality in the operation of the Society is only incompletely met by the Constitution of the Board of Counsellors, although they are intended to represent the Fellows in all parts of the Commonwealth. The same circumstance of distance which prevents the full attendance of Fellows at the annual meeting, has also an effect on the meetings of the Counsellors. Besides this, their election by the Society at large, amidst the press and hurry of business at their annual meeting, when many of the members are called upon to vote without opportunity for previous consultation, sometimes even without



personal acquaintance with each other and with the candidates ; prevents that deliberate consideration which is necessary to the selection of persons suitable for the office, and of those whose leisure will permit them to attend to its duties. These circumstances have often occupied the attention of the members with the view of devising means for obviating their unfavorable influence ; and in the Convention of 1839, a provision was made for the selection of lists of candidates by the Districts, which, although a decided improvement upon the former method, has still, proved only a partial remedy for the inequality which is felt to exist.

The result of this has almost necessarily been that the Counsellors and Officers have been virtually chosen, and the affairs of the Society chiefly managed by those Fellows who reside within a certain circuit around Boston. The Committee fully believe, that the powers which have thus almost of necessity fallen into their hands, have been fairly exercised, and with a sincere purpose of promoting the best interests of the profession ; yet they are nevertheless of opinion, could means be devised by which the relation which members bear to the Society should be rendered more uniform and equal, that its salutary influence would be more extensively diffused over the Commonwealth, and an interest in its character and prosperity become the common feeling of the whole profession.

With the hope of promoting so desirable a result, the Committee submit, for the consideration of the Counsellors, a plan for certain modifications of the

organization of the Society and for some alterations in the arrangements for its meetings and its publications, which are embodied in the following articles.

1. The Counsellors shall be chosen by the Fellows of the Society in their several Districts; if practicable, at least one week before the annual meeting—the choice to be made by the District Society, where one exists; and where such a Society does not exist, by a Convention of the Fellows of the District, called for this special purpose, in such manner as may be hereafter provided. If any District fail to choose Counsellors by one of these modes, then the whole body of the Counsellors, at their annual meeting, shall fill the vacancy.

2. The District Societies shall have the power of admitting persons to Fellowship in their several Districts, who shall thus become Fellows of the Society at large, and shall receive from it their certificate of admission; but a common standard of qualification for admission shall be established, to which all the Districts shall conform, and all admissions shall be subject to the revisal of the Board of Counsellors.

3. The annual meeting of the Counsellors shall be held on the day preceding that of the annual meeting of the Society. At this meeting they shall choose the officers and transact the business of the Society, as nearly as practicable, as is done under the present organization.

4. The annual meeting of the Society shall be held in such of the principal towns or cities of the

Commonwealth, as the Counsellors shall, from year to year, determine. They shall also appoint, annually, a presiding officer for the meeting and the dinner; and a committee, who, with the presiding officer, shall have charge of all the necessary arrangements for the occasion.

5. There may be annually prepared, under the direction of the Counsellors, and at the expense of the Society, a Retrospect of the Medical Literature and Science of the preceding year, having reference especially to discoveries and improvements of practical value. This Retrospect shall be published in the place of, or in addition to, the present annual volume, at the discretion of the Counsellors.

6. In order to ensure a full and fair expression of opinion, on the part of the Society, concerning these propositions, a copy of this report shall be transmitted to each Fellow, with a request that he return to the Secretary his assent to, or dissent from, its several articles, in the form of a distinct affirmative or negative with regard to each, within some definite period. Should it appear from the returns thus received, that the alterations in question, or any of them, receive the approbation of a majority of the Fellows, they shall be considered as adopted, and the Counsellors shall take such measures as are necessary to carry them into effect.

In concluding their Report, the Committee beg leave to add a few remarks to those already made, concerning the expediency of these changes, especially that which relates to the place of holding the annual meeting.



It is not to be anticipated that the actual number of Fellows attending the annual meeting in any single year, will be as great as upon the present plan ; still, it is believed that in any given succession of years, a greater proportion of them will have it in their power to be sometimes present. Many who can now *always* attend without inconvenience, will be occasionally deprived of this privilege ; but on the other hand, very many who now *seldom*, and perhaps *never* have it in their power to attend, will have the opportunity presented to them as frequently as their hitherto more favored brethren.

The arrangement now suggested the Committee believe will be more advantageous to the Society than to relinquish entirely the meeting of the Fellows at large, and to limit the organization of the general body of physicians of the State to the representative system. In a larger community this might be necessary, but in so small a territory and with so dense a population as ours, the union of the two systems does not seem to be impracticable, and the general assembly of the Fellows at their annual festival, seems always to have been singularly beneficial in promoting good feelings, and a right professional relationship among those who come together.

It is also believed that these meetings, conducted on this plan, may be made the means of bringing this Society more under the notice and knowledge of the community, and of increasing its respectability and usefulness, by making mankind acquainted with its just claims, and consequently also with the

true character of the regular members of the profession. In a large city, meetings of this description are matters of common occurrence ; they excite no attention and exert little influence. But in other places, such a meeting as ours would be an occurrence of some importance, would excite interest, and this not only in the place itself, but to some extent also in the surrounding district.

The Committee would also suggest whether it is not within the purposes of the establishment of the Society, to take some interest in promoting medical education and raising the standard of professional acquirement in the Commonwealth. This subject is especially worthy of consideration at the present time, when the attention of the whole body of the profession has been called to it by their delegates at the meeting of the American Medical Association. It is believed that a decided impulse will be given to medical education, and that its standard will be gradually elevated, as the result of the labors of this body ; and it is due to the character of our community, never behind any other in enterprises of this description, that we should do our full share in so good a work.

JOHN WARE,

*For the Committee.*